



California makes the lion's share of the wine consumed in the United States, from the simplest white Zinfandels to the most sought-after cult Cabernet Sauvignons. Vineyards extend up and down the Golden State, and most Americans get their first taste of wine from one of California's nearly 2,700 wineries. • Yet along with this abundance comes a paradox. Simply stated, California doesn't dominate what most of us consider the values category. There are several reasons for this state of affairs, including the state's lofty land prices and the keen market demand for its highest-quality wines.

However, there are still many rich veins to tap when it comes to mining values from California. Our strategy in this report was to hit the state's viticultural sweet spot: exceptional quality at less-than-exorbitant prices.

The first parameter was quality at the highest level (90 or more points on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale), while a price ceiling of \$50 per bottle was set to ensure the greatest diversity and number of wines. Attention was also paid to availability, with production amounts for the most part measured in thousands of cases. Finally, we focused on the most recent releases; many of the recommended wines were tasted within the last two months in our Napa office. Our search yielded a diversity of terrific wines, including some surprises. And it pointed to some important trends; for instance, Syrah contributed more wines to our list than did any other variety, and Napa Valley asserted its primacy despite its pricy reputation.

The final inventory of 51 outstanding values runs the gamut of what's produced in California. It's a list that should excite any California wine lover, from traditionalists who cellar Cabernet and Chardonnay, to those leaning toward Rhône Valley-inspired wines, to Pinot Noir and sparkling wine fans. In the following pages, you will find tasting notes and profiles that provide insight into these top values and their makers. (There's also a summary chart to use as a handy reference when wine shopping; to give you more options, we have beefed it up with wines scoring 84 to 89 points that are priced at \$25 or less. Nearly 190 values are represented in all.)

Among our profiled wineries are some genuine superstars. The 2004 Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Oakville Cabernet, a pair of Burgundian beauties from Mount Eden in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and two wines from venerable Napa producer Beringer are among the outstanding offerings you'll find.

To our surprise, Napa Valley, with 19, placed the most wines on this list, including not just 10 Cabernets, but also wines from Marsanne, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Zinfandel.

Sonoma ranks a close second in sheer numbers, with 18. Chardonnay and Zinfandel, with four choices each, dominate, followed by Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc. The extensive list of Sonoma Pinots we'd hoped for didn't materialize, mainly because most Pinot Noirs are made in minuscule volumes regardless of where they're grown.

Santa Barbara also made a strong showing, with six selections, anchored by Syrah. Cabernet and Syrah were at the core of the largest



High in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco, historic Mount Eden Vineyards makes Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs that should be on your short list when searching out values from California.

number of wines overall, with 11 and 10 wines respectively, followed by Zinfandel, with nine bottlings, and Chardonnay with eight.

Of course, as vintages change, so do the choices. But most producers profiled here deliver quality wines year in and year out, and many of these wineries (and winemakers) make multiple values bottlings, often of diverse varietals, so committing their names to memory can be a good values-buying strategy regardless of grape type. Beringer, Buehler, IO, JC Cellars, Cliff Lede, Mount Eden, Navarro, Rosenblum, V. Sattui, Sbragia and Seghesio each fielded a pair in this report, while winemakers such as Ed Sbragia (of Beringer and Sbragia), Adam and Dianna Lee (Siduri and Novy), and Jonathan Nagy (Byron and IO) made exceptional wines for more than one label. Finally, look to up-and-coming varieties such as Syrah to continue to power ahead, and expect Napa, Sonoma and Santa Barbara to go from strength to strength in future vintages. There are plenty of values still to be found in the hills—and valleys—of the Golden State.

CALIFORNIA VALUES AT A GLANCE

For complete reviews, see the Buying Guide of this or previous issues or www.winespectator.com.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	CASES MADE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE	CASES MADE
RED & ROSÉ				JC CELLARS The Imposter California 2005	92	\$32	1,143
BABCOCK Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills Grand Cuvee 2006	90	\$40	950	JC CELLARS Syrah California Cuvée 2005	92	\$25	760
BEAULIEU VINEYARD Merlot Napa Valley 2004	85	\$15	44,000	KENWOOD Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma County 2004	86	\$18	71,000
BENNETT LANE Maximus Red Napa Valley 2005	90	\$35	7,000	KINTON Syrah Santa Barbara County 2005	87	\$20	5,900
BERINGER Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2004	90	\$40	4,700	KUNDE ESTATE Syrah Sonoma Valley 2003	87	\$22	1,500
BERINGER Merlot Napa Valley 2005	87	\$20	30,500	KUNIN Pape Star Central Coast 2006	88	\$20	2,100
BERINGER Merlot North Coast Third Century 2005	85	\$14	42,100	KUNIN Zinfandel Paso Robles Westside 2006	87	\$22	1,600
BERINGER Pinot Noir Napa Valley 2006	86	\$20	15,500	LAFOND Syrah Sta. Rita Hills SRH 2006	88	\$20	1,953
BISHOP'S PEAK Rock Solid Red Paso Robles 2004	87	\$12	5,530	LAVA ROCK Napa Valley 2005	86	\$15	1,800
BOGLE Petite Sirah California 2005	88	\$11	100,000	LE BON VIN DE LA NAPA VALLEY Merlot Napa Valley 2004	85	\$14	1,500
BOGLE Phantom California 2004	88	\$17	20,000	CLIFF LEDE Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District 2004	92	\$50	1,673
BONNY DOON Vin Gris de Cigare California 2006	86	\$13	12,574	CLIFF LEDE Claret Stags Leap District 2005	90	\$35	3,818
BUEHLER Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2005	90	\$27	13,000	LUNA Merlot Napa Valley 2004	91	\$40	2,750
BUEHLER Zinfandel Napa Valley 2005	90	\$17	2,500	MARGERUM M5 Santa Barbara County 2006	90	\$28	2,200
CAMBRIA Syrah Santa Maria Valley Tepasquet Vineyard 2005	89	\$20	7,700	MARTIN RAY Merlot Napa Valley 2003	87	\$20	2,900
CASTLE ROCK Pinot Noir Mendocino County 2006	86	\$12	110,000	MAZZOCCO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Maple 2005	92	\$36	450
CLINE Carignane Contra Costa County Ancient Vine 2006	87	\$16	2,600	MAZZOCCO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley West Dry Creek 2005	91	\$27	600
CLINE Cashmere California 2005	87	\$16	10,800	MELVILLE Syrah Santa Barbara County Verna's Estate 2005	87	\$22	2,864
CLINE Merlot California Red Truck 2005	85	\$12	25,000	MICHAEL & DAVID PHILLIPS Petite Petit Lodi 2005	87	\$22	8,000
CLINE Mourvèdre Contra Costa County Ancient Vines 2005	85	\$16	13,190	ROBERT MONDAVI Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Napa Valley 2004	93	\$45	10,687
CLINE Syrah California 2005	86	\$10	25,500	MOUNT EDEN Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2004	90	\$42	609
CLINE Syrah Sonoma Coast Cool Climate 2005	86	\$17	5,375	NAVARRO Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Méthode à l'Ancienne 2004	92	\$25	5,224
CLOS DU BOIS Merlot North Coast 2004	86	\$18	345,000	NAVARRO Pinot Noir Mendocino 2005	86	\$18	2,924
CLOS MIMI Syrah Paso Robles Petite Rousse 2005	87	\$19	3,744	NAVARRO Zinfandel Mendocino 2004	92	\$19	2,193
CYCLES GLADIATOR Syrah Central Coast 2005	85	\$10	12,500	NEYERS Syrah Sonoma Coast Old Lakeville Road 2006	93	\$30	1,155
DE LOACH Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2006	89	\$20	17,000	NOVY Syrah Napa Valley 2005	90	\$22	452
DOMAINE DE LA TERRE ROUGE Tête-à-Tête Sierra Foothills 2004	88	\$15	2,000	NOVY Syrah Sonoma County 2005	87	\$19	1,400
FESS PARKER Syrah Santa Barbara County 2004	89	\$20	3,565	OBSIDIAN RIDGE VINEYARD Cabernet Sauvignon Red Hills Lake County 2004	87	\$25	1,871
FETZER Cabernet Sauvignon California Valley Oaks 2005	84	\$9	450,000	OJAI Syrah California Roll Ranch 2004	90	\$45	700
FETZER Merlot California Valley Oaks 2005	84	\$9	300,000	PARAISO Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands 2004	86	\$20	1,524
FETZER Shiraz California Valley Oaks 2005	84	\$9	15,000	PEDRONCELLI Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Mother Clone 2005	86	\$14	8,000
FOUR VINES Syrah Paso Robles 2005	87	\$18	1,384	RENWOOD Port Sierra Foothills Vintage 2003	86	\$15	1,000
FOUR VINES Zinfandel Amador County Maverick 2005	91	\$24	2,529	ROOTS RUN DEEP Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Educated Guess 2005	88	\$20	18,000
FOUR VINES Zinfandel California Old Vine Cuvee 2005	87	\$14	20,000	ROSENBLUM Chateau La Paws Côte Du Bone Roan California 2005	87	\$14	6,699
GALLO FAMILY VINEYARDS Syrah Sonoma County Sonoma Reserve 2005	87	\$15	3,200	ROSENBLUM Mourvèdre San Francisco Bay Appellation Series 2005	87	\$18	1,043
GREG NORMAN CALIFORNIA ESTATES Petite Sirah Paso Robles 2005	87	\$15	10,000	ROSENBLUM Petite Sirah Redwood Valley Rhodes Vineyard 2005	87	\$25	2,547
HAHN Syrah Central Coast 2005	87	\$14	10,000	ROSENBLUM Petite Sirah San Francisco Bay Heritage Clones 2006	89	\$18	7,475
HANDLEY Pinot Noir Mendocino County 2006	88	\$25	1,516	ROSENBLUM Petite Sirah Sonoma County Kick Ranch 2005	91	\$35	956
HITCHING POST Syrah Santa Barbara County Big Circle 2006	87	\$25	2,000	ROSENBLUM Syrah Lodi Abba Vineyard 2005	88	\$25	2,321
HONIG Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2005	90	\$40	11,500	ROSENBLUM Syrah Sonoma County Atoosa Vineyard 2005	91	\$35	987
IO Syrah San Luis Obispo County Ryan Road 2005	90	\$48	594	ROSENBLUM Syrah Sonoma County Hillside Vineyards 2005	89	\$25	1,566
IO Syrah Santa Maria Valley Upper Bench 2005	92	\$48	639	ROSENBLUM Zinfandel Contra Costa County 2006	86	\$18	6,500
IRON HORSE Sangiovese Alexander Valley T-T Vineyard Rosato di 2006	85	\$14	1,863	ROSENBLUM Zinfandel Sonoma County House Family Vineyard 2005	89	\$25	1,220
J. LOHR Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles Seven Oaks 2005	84	\$17	300,000	RUBICON Zinfandel Rutherford Edizione Pennino 2005	90	\$42	1,976
J. LOHR Syrah Paso Robles South Ridge 2005	85	\$15	15,913	V. SATTUI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2004	90	\$29	2,627
JACUZZI Merlot Sonoma County Rosso di Sette Fratelli 2004	86	\$16	1,850	V. SATTUI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Morisoli Vineyard 2004	93	\$48	1,233
JADE MOUNTAIN La Provençale California 2005	86	\$18	2,147	SAUSAL Zinfandel Alexander Valley Old Vine 2004	88	\$18	3,000
JADE MOUNTAIN Syrah Napa Valley 2004	91	\$28	3,050	SBRAGIA FAMILY Merlot Dry Creek Valley Home Ranch 2005	87	\$25	1,090
JADE MOUNTAIN Syrah Red Hills Lake County Snows Lake Vineyard 2005	89	\$18	2,841	SCREW KAPPA NAPA Merlot Napa Valley 2004	85	\$14	9,800
				SEBASTIANI Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma County 2005	87	\$18	53,000